

Rimini 4, Wycombe Wanderers 2

WYCOMBE Wanderers came up against Italian football at its best on Thursday when they were beaten — but not disgraced — in the only match of their seven day tour.

In a magnificent stadium which holds 20,000 and sports a pitch more like a bowling green, the Blues were outclassed for a time by Rimini's professionals and trailed 3-0 at the interval. After the break, however, they produced some useful football of their own and scored two fine goals that brought deserved applause from the crowd.

Considering everything was against Wanderers, they put up a creditable performance in this friendliest of friendlies.

The tourists were hoping to play two matches during their stay but as all their scheduled opponents were involved in vital league matches on Sunday, the only game Wanderers could get was against Rimini — and under certain conditions. With the home club playing Como (Milan) on Sunday in a match they must at least draw to avoid relegation to Division 3, they were understandably worried about injuries. Consequently, there was very little physical contact during the game. As double insurance, Rimini's manager refereed the match, giving his players a fair bit of advice at the same time!

Despite the fact that neither side was able to go full out, the game was full of entertainment and quite an experience for some of the younger Wycombe players. Both sides concentrated on timed, flowing football but the contrasts in style were fascinating.

One thing that stood out particularly was the superior teamwork and control of the Italians, who it must be said, should have won this match hands down as they are all full

time professionals. Building slowly from the back, they sprayed some beautiful passes around the field until an opening was eventually carved out. When that came, their acceleration was electric and the finishing deadly.

In the end, Wanderers were playing the same game but at first they wasted possession far too often and paid the penalty by conceding three goals, two of them coming inside a minute.

Ian Bath, one of seven guests on tour, saved well from Rimini's outstanding player Romano early on, while Ian Pearson sent goalkeeper Recchi full length after cutting inside after 15 minutes.

BRILLIANCE

The Italians' patient build-ups were beginning to make their mark and after 24 minutes Romano produced a flash of brilliance for the first goal. Given a couple of yards space, he accelerated and then exploded a curling shot past Bath and into the top corner.

With the heat affecting some players more than others, Graham Mackenzie and Steve Hill for example, Wanderers eventually cracked again. In the 23rd minute a neat 1-2 between Fagni and Romano ended with Fagni placing the ball wide of the helpless Bath for the second goal. Within 30 seconds Visentin made it 3-0 with a cheeky goal, curling the ball past the goalkeeper with the outside of his boot.

Wanderers were undoubtedly helped by the seven half-time changes in the Rimini side but they deserve full credit for a gutsy second half display

which might have brought them more than two goals.

Before that, however, they conceded a fourth goal after 59 minutes when the Italians bemused the Blues defence with a series of brilliant first time passes that ended with Visentin bagging a second goal for himself.

Although this was probably the best goal of the game, Derek Cotterell's 68th minute reply was certainly the best shot. Derek had come on for Mackenzie and when a corner was cleared out to him, he let fly with a first time shot that crashed into the net from some 25 yards.

Pearson, who generally disappointed against a strong and tight defence, almost made it 4-2 with a drive that the goalkeeper parried well and then produced a fine piece of skill for the second Wanderers goal.

From Geoff Anthony's near post pass, Ian flicked the ball up and then clipped it over his head for Tony Horseman to nod home.

Carnevali hit an upright in the closing stages but on their second half performance Wycombe didn't deserve to concede further goals and they must have been satisfied with their display against a highly skilled Italian outfit.

RIMINI: Recchi; Agostinelli, Grezzani, Nanni, R. Romano; Visentin, Fagni, G. Romano; Maccio, Russo, Pellezzaro. Subs: Tancredi, Rossi, Natali, Zorazzo, Marini, Dimaio, Carnevali.

WYCOMBE: I. Bath; W. Roberts (sub N. Wheeldon 57 mins), W. Salkeld, K. Mead, S. Voss; G. Mackenzie (sub D. Cotterill 57 mins), J. Priestley, M. Hollfield; I. Pearson, S. Hill (sub A. Horseman 54 mins), G. Anthony. Sub E. Junger (not used).

Half-time: 3-0. **Goalscorers:** Rimini: Visentin (33, 59), Romano (24), Fagni (32).

Attendance: 400.